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River-is-at-pre-event-conditions-

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Steve Lewis/Durango Herald

“As always, the EPA is going to let science be our guide,” Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Gina McCarthy told reporters on Wednesday at the La Plata County Fairgrounds. McCarthy visited Durango on Wednesday in response to a spill of 3 million gallons of heavy-metal tainted water an EPA-contracted crew accidentally released at the Gold King Mine near Silverton on Aug. 5.

Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Gina McCarthy said the latest samples from the Animas River show pH and metal levels have returned to normal after 3 million gallons of polluted mine wastewater was accidentally released from the abandoned Gold King Mine above Silverton.

The samples were taken Friday, Saturday and Sunday.

In a 15-minute news conference at the EPA’s command center in Durango, McCarthy called the event “heartbreaking.” She apologized for the disaster and said the EPA takes full responsibility, acknowledging the agency is charged with protecting the public.

EPA is conducting an internal investigation into the cause of the spill, she said.

McCarthy said she plans to rely on her experts on-scene of the mine spill, and she does not plan to visit the site herself. She did walk down to the river in Durango, she said.

McCarthy made no plans to meet with the public. Instead, she will meet with federal and local officials behind closed doors.

She wanted to assure the public that leaders are working hard and working with local governments. She wants “science to be our guide.”

A claims process is underway for residents and businesses that have been adversely affected by the spill, but she had no update on how many people have made claims.

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